Part Four

AHADITH

WHAT IS HADITH?

‘Hadith’ (حديث) literally means ‘talk’.

In Shia terminology ‘Hadith’ means the talk of a Masum and also the narration which describes the talk, action or ‘Taqreer’ of a Masum.

Talk of a Masum includes his writings and sign (Ishara) also.

If a Masum abstains from a work or thing, then this abstaining also is counted as an ‘action’ (in the above definition).

Taqreer of Masum: If a follower of a Masum did a work in the presence of the Masum and the said Masum did not prohibit him from that work, it is called ‘Taqreer’ of the Masum and it is a binding authority (with some conditions, of course).

If any narration does not reach a Masum, it is not counted as ‘Hadith’ according to Shia terminology. (Though sometimes a talk of a companion of a Masum or a disciple of such a companion is called ‘Hadith’ just as a figurative expression).

But according to Sunni terminology talk of the Prophet, and his companions and disciples of such companions is called ‘Hadith’.

Ahadith (احاديث) is the plural of Hadith.

Some Definitions:

Hadith (حديث) is also called ‘Khabar’ (خبر), i.e. News, and ‘Athar’ (اثر) i.e. Trace or Track.

Many terms will be used in the following chapters. It is, therefore, necessary to explain important ones before hand. First, let me give here a full tradition with its translation:-

حماد بن سلمة عن محمد بن اسحاق عن عمروبن شعيب عن ابيه عن جده قال قلت يا رسول الله اكتب كل ما اسمع منك قال نعم قلت في الرضا و الغضب قال نعم فاني لا اقول في ذلك الا الحق

Hammad bin Salmah narrated from Muhammad bin Ishaque who narrated from Amr bin Shuaib who narrated from his father who narrated from his father who said:

"I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, should I write everything which I hear from you?' The Prophet said: 'Yes'. I said: 'In pleasure and displeasure? (i.e, should I write everything said by you in every condition?).'

The Prophet said: 'Yes! Because I do not say in any condition but the Truth'."

The first part of the hadith contains the names of narrators who heard it one from another. This chain of narrators is called 'Sanad' (سند). Plural : Asnad (اسناد).

The second part is the actual narration beginning from "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah!'" up to the end of the Hadith. It is called 'Matn' (متن) i.e the Text.

The narrator is called Rawi (راوئ): Plural, 'Ruwat' (رواة) = Narrators.

The value of a 'hadith' depends very much on the probity and trustworthiness of its 'Ruwat', as will be explained later.

The 'Sanad' and 'Matn' together are called one 'Hadith'.

HADITH: A BINDING AUTHORITY

The 'Hadith' of a Masum is the binding authority (حجّة) of Religion; and if anyone wants to succeed on the Day of Judgment he must follow the Hadith.

For example Allah says in the Qur'an:-

يا ايها الذين امنوا اطيعوالله و اطيعوالرسول و اولي الامرمنكم

"O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those who are Masters of the Affairs among you."

(Qur'an, 4:63)

In this ayat Allah makes it obligatory for the faithfuls to obey the Holy Prophet and the Masters of the Affairs, i.e 12 Imams. There is no need to emphasize that nobody can follow the Holy Prophet and Imams unless he knows what the Holy Prophet and Imams did say or did do. Therefore, their sayings and actions must be learnt and remembered so that one may follow them. And that brings us to Ahadith.

Meaning of Obedience and Following:

To follow a Masum means to do the same work as has been done by the Masum with the same intention. For example, the Holy Prophet received some money from a Muslim by way of Zakat; if now someone usurps some property or money from someone without any religious authority it will not be called following in the foot-steps of the Prophet.

It should be remembered that the Ahadith of the 12 Imams (a.s.) and Bibi Fatema Zahra (s.a.) are the Ahadith of the Holy Prophet himself.

The Imams themselves have made it quite clear many times. For example, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said:

“When I tell you some Hadith without any ‘Sanad’, i.e chain of narrators (سند) then my ‘Sanad’ (سند) is from my father, who narrated it through his fore-fathers (Imam Husain a.s and Ameerul Mumeneen a.s) from the Holy Prophet who heard from Gabriel who was informed by Allah.”

For a person who did not see a Masum or did not hear from him, the only way to know the religion is through the Ahadith of the Holy Prophet, 12 Imams and Bibi Fatema Zahra (peace be upon them all).

But it is necessary to see that the Hadith is authentic and passes all relevant tests. In the following chapters some details about the kinds of Ahadith will be given to help the readers in this task.

RUWAT (NARRATORS)

The strength of a Hadith greatly depends upon its Ruwat.

Some important qualifications of the Rawi are as follows:-

The Rawi of a Hadith must be Baligh (adult), sane, Muslim, ‘Aadil’, and of good memory; also, according to the Shia Ithna Ashari rules, he should be a Shia Ithna Ashari, though in some cases, the Ahadith narrated by non-Ithna Ashari Muslims are accepted.

‘Aadil’ means a person who does not commit any big sin even unintentionally, and if he commits small sins (not intentionally) then he repents at once. Only an Aadil person can be relied upon. If he is not Aadil, he may forge Ahadith and mislead people.

Good memory is necessary for a Rawi if he is to be trusted; otherwise, he may forget something and thus change, add or omit some wordings etc. from the Hadith.

It is not necessary that a Rawi be a learned Aalim.

CATEGORIES OF AHADITH ACCORDING TO THE RUWAT

Allama Hilli (r.a) and those Ulama who came after him have divided the Ahadith into four categories according to the qualifications of the Ruwat:-

1. Sahih (correct; True): A hadith all of whose Ruwat are Shia Ithna Ashari and all have been praised for "Trust-worthiness". For example, such wordings have been used for all of them: انه ثقة (He is Trustworthy); انه صحيح الحديث (His Ahadith are correct) and such other words which show their "trustworthiness".

2. Hasan (Good): A hadith all of whose narrators are Shia Ithna Ashari but not all of them have been praised for trustworthiness; instead some or all have been praised in such words:-

انه مستحسن (He is appreciated; virtuous)

انه حافظ (He is of good memory) and such words.

3. Muwaththaque (Firm): A hadith not all of whose narrators are Shia Ithna Ashari, but all have been praised for "Trustworthiness".

4. Dhaif (Weak): A hadith which is neither sahih, Hasan not Muwaththaque.

The first three categories are considered as genuine. 'Dhaif' has got no worth at all, unless it was accepted by all Ulama of the early period in which case called مقبول Maqbool (accepted) i.e having been accepted by early scholars.

As has been mentioned in a previous lesson, hadith consists of a 'Sanad' (chain of narrators) and a 'Matn' (Text).

If a 'hadith' is said to be 'Dhaif' (weak) it means that that particular 'Sanad' is 'weak'. But that same text might have been narrated somewhere else with 'Sahih', 'Hasan' or 'Muwaththaque' 'Sanad'.

There are many sub-divisions of the Ahadith; but I do not want to give all those details here.

'MUTAWATIR' AND 'WAHID'

According to the number of Asnad, the Ahadith are divided into two categories:-

1. Mutawatir (متواتر): It means 'a hadith narrated by so many people that the very number of narrators is enough to create conviction of the truth of the said Hadith.'

Four conditions are necessary to make a Hadith Mutawatir:-

(a) There must be, in all stages of narrations, so many people that the reason cannot accept their joining together on a lie. If the number is great, for example, in the beginning and end but too small in the middle, such a Hadith is not called Mutawatir.

Thus, the number of narrators of the Hadith انما الاعمال با لنيات(Verily, the actions are valued by the intentions), is too great in the middle and later stages, but in the beginning its only narrator is Umar. So, it is not Mutawatir.

(b) The information conveyed should be about a thing which can be felt by any one of the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch).

(c) The hearers should not have prior knowledge of that matter.

(d) The hearers should not have a prior doubt about that information nor a preconceived belief opposed to that information.

If a 'hadith' is 'Mutawatir', there is no need to look at its Ruwat and Asnad.

'<u>Mutawatir</u>' is of two kinds:-

(a) Mutawatir in words: That Hadith which is narrated by all narrators in the same wording. For example, the Hadith من كنت مؤلاه فعلئ مولاه (That whose Master am I, Ali is his Master), and the Hadith

من كذب عليّ متعمدا فليتبوّء مقعده من النار

(Whoever tells a lie on me, should prepare his abode in the Fire of Hell).

(b) Mutawatir in meaning: If the narrators use different wordings but there is a factor common in all narrations, then that common factor will be called Mutawatir in meaning. For example, let us suppose that some one says that Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s) killed 35 enemies in the battle of Badr; another says that he conquered the fortress of Khaibar; a third one says that he stayed fighting in Uhud while others fled away, and likewise. Now all such narrations have one common factor – that Ali bin Abi Talib

(a.s) was extra-ordinarily brave. Though each and every event in itself may not be Mutawatir but the bravery of Ali is 'Mutawatir'.

2. The second main category of Ahadith is 'Wahid' (خبر واحد). Every hadith, whose narrators are not so many as to make it a Mutawatir, is called a 'Wahid'.

   As the Mutawatir hadith creates knowledge of truth of its transformation, it is obligatory to follow it.

But the 'Wahid hadith' is joined with a context or association (قرينة) which creates sure knowledge of its truth, then it will be obligatory to accept and follow it like a Mutawatir hadith. Here are a few examples of such context:-

(1) If that Hadith is in conformity with logical reasons;

(2) If it conforms with the clear meaning of the Qur'an;

(3) If it conforms with an unanimous belief of the Muslims;

(4) If it conforms with an unanimous belief of the Shiite sect of Islam.

If a Wahid Hadith is associated with any of the above mentioned contexts, it must be accepted and followed.

If it is not joined by any such Qarina (قرينة) i.e context, then also according to many Ulama, it is allowed to follow it, provided it is not against the accepted tenets of the religion.

RECORDING OF AHADITH

The Holy Prophet himself exhorted the Muslims to note down whatever they hear from him. Ameerul Mumeneen Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s) and his successors always emphasized the importance and essentiality of writing the Ahadith. Many companions of the Prophet like Abdullah bin Abbas, Salman Farsi, Abu Dhar, Bilal, Abu Rafe, wrote the traditions of the Holy Prophet. Likewise many of their disciples, like Mitham Tammar, Ali bin Abu Rafe, Rabia bin Sumay, Asbagh bin Nubata, Ubaidullah bin Al-Hur, Sulaim bin Qais Hilali also wrote the traditions heard from Ameerul Mumeneen and other trustworthy companions:

Unfortunately almost all these books are now lost except the book of Sulaim bin Qais Hilali.

Coming to the era of Imams (a.s) after Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s), we find that thousand of famous companions of Imams (a.s) had collected the Ahadith they heard from them.

Some of those companions are respected so much that the Shia scholars unanimously agree that if a hadith is narrated by any one of them it is “authentic”.

They are divided into three groups:-

First Group: Six companions of Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s). They are:-

1. Zurara bin Aayun
2. Maruf bin Kharabbudh
3. Buraid bin Muawiya Bijilli
4. Abu Basir Asadi
5. Fudhail bin Yasar
6. Muhammad bin Muslim Thaquafi

Note: Some people count Abu Basir Muradi in place of Abu Basir Asadi.

Second Group: Six companions of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s). They are:-

1. Jamil bin Darraj
2. Abdullah bin Maskan
3. Andullah bin Bakir
4. Hammad bin Uthman
5. Hammad bin Isa
6. Aban bin Uthman Ahmar

Third Group: Six companions of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) and Imam Ali Ridha (a.s). They are:-

1. Yunus bin Abdur Rahman Yaqteeni
2. Safwan bin Yahya
3. Abdullah bin Mughira
4. Muhammad bin Abi Umair Azdi
5. Hasan bin Mahbub
6. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abu Nasr

Note: Some people count Hasan bin Ali bin Fadhal in place of Hasan bin Mahbub; others add the name of Fadhala bin Ayyub or Uthman bin Isa in this list.

Some other famous names are Abu Hamza Thumali, Aban bin Taghlib, Jabir bin Yazid Jofi, Muhammad bin Qais, Hesham bin Hakam, Hesham bin Salim, Abdullah bin Yahya Kahili, Ali bin Riab Kufi, Mansur bin Hazim, Ali bin Yaqteen bin Musa, Abdullah bin Mughaira Bijilli, Muawiya bin Hukaim, Zakaria bin Adam, Ismail bin Mehran, Abdur Rahman bin Abi Najran, Husain bin Said bin Hammad, Ali bin Mahzyar Ahwazi, Fadhl bin Shadhan, Abu Jaffar Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Isa, Ayyub bin Nuh bin Darraj, Ali bin Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), Ahmad bin Ishaque Qummi.

These were some of those highly respected companions of Imams (a.s) who collected traditions and wrote many other books which are mentioned in their biographical sketches.

In short, from the days of Ameerul Mumineen (a.s) up to the days of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) companions of Imams (a.s) wrote more than 6600 books, most of them containing the Ahadith of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and Imams (a.s).

STYLES OF BOOKS

Writing of books in those days was not like present times. The books of traditions have been written in one of the following styles:-

1. Sometimes some people noted down one long tradition on one subject. For example, Salman (r.a) noted down the Hadith of Jatheleeque (Catholic).

   In early period mostly such booklets were written.

2. Others collected the Ahadith of one subject in one booklet. During the period of Imams (a.s) thousands of such booklets were written. The collection was usually known as Kitabus Salat (Book of Prayer), Kitabul Hajj (Book of Pilgrimage), etc. etc.

3. Some people collected Ahadith of different subjects in one volume. Such collections were called ‘Nawadir’ (نوادر).

4. Many companions noted down whatever hadith they heard from Imams, without any distinction of the subject and without dividing them into chapters. Such collections were called ‘Asl’ (اصل). (Plural: Usul = Foundations). 400 such ‘Usul’ were prevalent among the Shias at the time of the death of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s).

5. Later scholars collected and arranged the Ahadith subjectwise and in chapters etc.

Such books are called ‘Book’.

The 400 books which were called ‘Usul’ were most popular. They were the basis of all tenets, beliefs and laws of Shia Ithna Ashari faith.

As there was no press in those days, those 400 Usul were not easy to find everywhere. Also, the persecution of the Shias made the owners extraordinarily cautious. They did not give their copies except to those who were completely trustworthy.

Also, none of these 400 books contained all Ahadith concerning all aspects of religion. Moreover, they were not divided according to the subject, etc. Therefore, any one who wanted to refer to them to ascertain a subject faced much difficulty in finding the relevant hadith.

There was a danger that these treasures of religion would be lost forever because of the persecution; and also because it was not easy in those days to obtain and preserve 400 books.

And there was a need to arrange the Ahadith subject-wise to facilitate its use by the readers.

THE FOUR BOOKS

The Shia scholars after the death of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) were of the opinion that if all the Ahadith in those 400 ‘Usul’ were collected in one book and divided subject-wise into parts, chapters and sub-chapters, it would fulfill a great need of the time and would ensure the safety of that vast treasure of knowledge, as it would be far easier to handle one book instead of 400 books.

It was not an easy task; collecting all the Usul from far and wide was an uphill task in itself; then the editing and arranging them was another painstaking job. All eyes were on Thiqatul Islam Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Yaqub al-Kulaini Ar-Razi. When the pressure mounted, he accepted the responsibility.

It was the period of Ghaibat-e-Sughra, when our 12th Imam lived in Samarra, but people were not allowed to meet him; and his Chief Deputies resided in Baghdad. Abu Jafar Kulaini was also in Baghdad, and was highly respected by all Deputies of Imam (a.s). He had a unique opportunity to sift and analyze the Ahadith.

And thus, after 20 years’ continuous back-breaking effort, ‘KAFI’ came into being.

This book alone contains more Ahadith than all the six authentic books (Sihah-e-Sitta) of the Sunnis put together.

Al-Kulaini was born in 260 A.H. and died in 329 A.H.

Some other scholars also collected the Ahadith from other books and Usul. Famous among them are:-

Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Ali (bin Husain bin Musa bin Babwayh Qummi), popularly known as Shaikh Saduque (died 381 A.H) wrote 'Man La Yahdhuruhul Faqih'.

Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Hasan bin Ali at-Tusi popularly known as Shaikhut-Taifa and Shaikh Tusi (born, 385 A.H; died 466 A.H.) wrote 'Tahzib-ul-Ahkaam' and 'Al-Istibsar'.

The later two books opened the way of critical study of Ahadith, and thus, laid the foundation of 'Ijtihad'.

It would have been noticed that all three authors of these four books were named Muhammad, and had Kunniyyat of 'Abu Jafar'.

In 448 A.H., the Sunnis of Baghdad attacked the Shias and burned the library and house of Shaikh Tusi. He with his disciples went to Najaf and founded the religious university and the town. His grave is in Najaf.

Many other collections of Ahadith were written in the period under review, but only these four books became popular and famous.

If a hadith is found in any of the above-mentioned books, it does not follow that that 'hadith' is automatically authentic.

Likewise, if a hadith is found in other collections which were compiled by trustworthy scholars and it fulfilled all conditions of authenticity, it will be accepted as 'authentic' even if it is not found in any of the above-mentioned books.

THE THREE LATER BOOKS

In later period the following collections of Ahadith became very popular:-

Allama Majlisi (Muhammad Baqir bin Muhammad Taqi) wrote Biharul Anwar which has 26 bulky volumes (died in 1101 A.H).

Mulla Mohsin Faiz (Muhammad bin Murtaza bin Mahmud) wrote 'Wafi' (Died in 1091 A.H).
Allama Muhammad bin Hasan al-Hur wrote 'Wasael-us-Shia' (Died in 1104 A.H)

It will be noticed that these three Traditionalists also were named 'Muhammad'.

They are called 'Later 3 Muhammads'.

In this century, Allama Husain Nuri wrote 'Mustadrakul Wasael' in 1319 A.H (Died in 1320 A.H).

SUNNI COLLECTIONS

Here are the names of some famous collections of Ahadith done by Sunni scholars:-

1. Imam Malik bin Anas bin Malik wrote 'Muwatta'(died in 175 A.H = 795 A.D.).

2. Hafiz Muhammad bin Ismail Bukhari wrote 'Sahih Bukhari' (died in 256 A.H = 870 A.D).

3. Muslim bin Hajjaj Neshapuri wrote 'Sahih Muslim' (died in 261 A.H = 875 A.D).

4. Hafiz Abu Isa Muhammad bin Isa bin Sura Tirmidhi wrote 'Jame', known as Sahih Tirmidhi (died in 279 A.H = 893 A.D)

5. Abu Dawood Sulaiman bin Ash-ath Sijistani wrote his 'Sunan' (died 275 A.H).

6. Abu Abdir Rehman Ahmad bin Shuaib Nasai wrote his 'Sunan' and 'Khasais' (died in 303 A.H. = 915 A.D)

These six books are jointly known as 'Sihah Sitta'(six authentic books) among Sunnis.

7. Hafiz Muhammad bin Yazid ibn Maja Qazwini, wrote 'Sunan' (died in 264 A.H = 886 A.D).

   Some people count it in 'Sihah-e-Sitta' in place of 'Muwatta'.

8. The son of Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, collected his 'Ahadith' which is known as 'Musnad' of Ahmad bin Hambal. (Ahmad bin Hambal died in 241 A.H = 855 A.H).

9. Imam Abul Qasim Sulaiman bin Ahmad Tabarani wrote 'Mujam Kabir' (died in 360 A.H).

10. Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Hakim Neshapuri wrote 'Mustadrak al as-Sahihain' (Died in 405 A.H).

11. Imam Abdur Rehman Jalaluddin Suyuti wrote 'Jam'ul Jawame' (Died in 911 A.H).

12. Sheikh Mulla Ali bin Husamuddin Muttaqui edited the book of Suyuti and named it 'Kanzul- Ummal' (Died in 975 A.H).

It must be noted again that being included in, or excluded from, these books has no effect upon the authenticity (or untrustworthiness) of a given hadith. As has been written in the preface of 'Mishkat-ul-Masabih', "the books of Sihah-e-Sitta contain all types of Hadith – Sahih, Hasan and Dhaif." Not only that. A thorough study will show that there are even many 'forged' and completely baseless 'Ahadith' in these books. Therefore, every hadith has to be judged on its own merits.

FABRICATED HADITH

'Mawdhu' (موضوع) literally means 'Forged'. In Islamic terminology it is used for that so-called 'hadith' which was not from any Masum, but someone forged it and attributed it to a Masum.

It is Haram and strictly unlawful to narrate a Mawdhu (موضوع) hadith except when it is first declared to be 'Forged'.

It is an extremely painful tragedy of early Islamic period that a good number of the companions of the Holy Prophet and many of their disciples used to fabricate Ahadith for material benefits or for the sake of sectarian polemics. It is not possible to give full details of this tragedy here. I will enumerate some of the causes which prompted such unscrupulous persons to lie on the Holy Prophet and Imams:-

1. Some people fabricated Ahadith to please the kings and the rulers.

2. Others fabricated Ahadith on the spur of the moment to fit it in their talks so that their popularity brings them worldly gains.

3. Many apparently ‘pious’ people forged Ahadith to exhort their audience to do good work. Such Ahadith are found mostly on the subject of abstaining from worldly affairs and sermons.

4. Many people forged Ahadith to support their own religious views. For example, Zanadiqua (زنادقة) forged at least 12000 Ahadith attributed to the Holy Prophet.

   A Kharijite said after repenting from his previous belief:-

   “Be careful in listening to the Ahadith; because we used to forge a hadith whenever we wanted to support an opinion.”

   Also, those people who believed that Imams were gods fabricated Ahadith in support of their belief.

5. Moavia and his successors in Bani Umayya started ‘whole-sale’ fabrication of Ahadith in praise of first 3 Khalifas and in condemnation of Ali and his family (a.s).

   Muslim histories reveal that in the beginning of the Bani Umayya, those people who forged the ‘sayings of the Prophet’ according to the wished of the rulers, were greatly encouraged. They were given handsome presents and heavily monthly allowances and thus they were immensely enriched. And those, who dared mention any true ‘saying’ of the Prophet which happened to be opposed to the desires and wishes of the rulers, were deprived of these helps, and their names were removed from the roll of Bait-ul-Mal (Treasury).

Such a person was turned out of the Darbar, and his statements were treated as ‘False’ and were rejected. (Ihtijaj of Tabarsi).

It is not against reason to come to the conclusion that those sayings of the Prophet which were against the policy of the government had more chances of being genuine than those which were in favour of the reigning group. The reason is obvious. Those who wrote against the government were always in danger of losing their lives, property and honour. On the other hand, those who wrote for the government had a strong worldly motive to coin stories and forge the traditions. The political needs of these sovereigns brought in very many things which were totally against the Islamic Faith.

One example may be given here of those so-called ‘Ahadith’ which attribute sins to the previous prophets and to the Holy Prophet of Islam. Most of those kings and rulers who are regarded as “Khalifa” according to the Sunni belief, were ‘non-Masum’ (not sinless), and most of them (especially from the Umayyads- and later Abbasides) were of very low moral standard and

were more deprived than even the common people. Under these circumstances, it was the easiest thing to save their skins from various charges by inventing stories and coining Ahadith to show that even the Holy Prophet himself was not free from sins; and therefore, there was no harm if those caliphs were guilty if various sins and crimes.

These “traditions” were forged by some “companions” of the Holy Prophet like Abu Huraira and his ilk. It is interesting to note that Abu Huraira accepted Islam at the end of the 7th year of Hijra and remained with the Holy Prophet for about 3 years only. And he claimed to hear in such a short period many things from the Holy Prophet which exceed by far the total Ahadith narrated in the Sunni books from the 4 Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali), Bibi Fatema, all wives of the Holy Prophet (including Aisha) and Hasan and Husain (a.s).

Traditionalists have found that there are 5374 Ahadith narrated by Abu Huraira.

Now look at the Ahadith of some of the above mentioned personalities recorded in Sunni books:-

Abu Bakr → 142 Ahadith
Umar → 537 Ahadith
Uthman → 146 Ahadith
Ali(a.s) → 586 Ahadith

1411 Ahadith

And these 4 Khalifas spent a total of about 86 years with the Holy Prophet. Now compare 1411 Ahadith in 86 years with 5374 Ahadith in 3 years!

What is more tragic is that Abu Huraira is not alone. There are scores like him, and their ‘Ahadith’ have found place in all Sunni books because they were companions of the Holy Prophet.

It is such Ahadith which serve as the armory for the enemies of Islam, who use them to cast doubt on the character, sincerity and truth of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

TEST OF TRADITIONS

Ahadith (traditions) have been collected by Sunnis and Shias alike in different books. But all those books are a collection of every kind of traditions. It must be clearly understood that there never was in Islam any system of canonization of the books. There was never any system of authorization by state or ‘church’ for the publication of the books. It helped

tremendously in the advancement of knowledge, because scholars were free to say whatever they liked. But so far as traditions were concerned it corrupted the authenticity of the traditions. Forgery and corruption of the Ahadith became a common disease. But soon devices were developed to test the authenticity or otherwise of the traditions:-

First test was provided by the Holy Prophet himself. He told the Muslims to test any tradition with the Qur'an. It has been mentioned earlier that every word of the Prophet was based upon revelation. And Qur'an also was revelation. And truth from the same source of knowledge cannot differ. Therefore, if a tradition (Hadith) was not against Qur'an, it was to be regarded as genuine one; if, on the other hand, it was against Qur'an, the Holy Prophet ordered them to reject it outright as fabrication.

The Second test was to check the character and life condition of those who narrated that tradition right from the person who heard it from Prophet to the last man in the chain. If the chain was broken or one or more links were weak or unreliable the tradition lost its value. The subject which deals in detail about the value of the narrators is named "Ilme Rijal" i.e "Knowledge about men". It is an objective criticism of every person in the field of tradition. As it has direct bearing upon the value of the tradition, which is part of revelation, this subject is one of the most important subjects of Islamic Theology. Thus, it will appear that though the books of Ahadith have not been purged from fabricated narrations, still we have full records by which every tradition may be tested, and accordingly accepted or rejected.

The Third test is of Diraya (دراية): It literally means "knowledge". In Islamic terminology it means verifying a hadith with "known" factors. For example, if a hadith attributed to the Holy Prophet contains a word which was not used in his days it will be a proof that that hadith was 'forged'. Or if some 'Rawi' mentions an event which he did not see himself and then he does not mention the name of his "source" it will be a proof of his forgery.

These 3 tests are the most important ones if one wants to sift the authentic Ahadith from the mass collections in the books of traditions.